



Neighborhood Networks Centers Make Health Care a Priority

At 34, an uninsured mother of two suffered from untreated cancer, suicidal depression and a history of substance abuse. Then, she received treatment from an on-site nurse at a Neighborhood Networks center. With that help, she enrolled in Medicaid, received comprehensive medical treatment and went to work.

A malnourished 68-year-old man with a skin disease and a seizure disorder had no access to health care other than the services delivered at a local emergency room. Then, a health professional at a Neighborhood Networks center managed his care. With that help, he received free care from a local medical system that provides some charity care and he learned how to manage his chronic conditions.

Residents are receiving health care at Neighborhood Networks centers in Baltimore, Denver and other Neighborhood Networks centers across the country.

Why is health care an essential component of Neighborhood Networks centers?

Increasingly, health care services and resources have become an essential component of Neighborhood Networks centers as center organizers and residents see the long-term value of promoting good health. Without health care, many residents are unable to participate successfully in employment and educational programs at centers.

Health statistics among low-income people tell the story.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, low-income adults are four to seven times as likely as higher-income adults to report suffering from poor health. They were three times as likely to be limited by chronic conditions.

And they die younger, too.

Men who earn a lower income are twice as likely to die from lung cancer and heart disease than those with a higher income. Women with diabetes who earn a lower income are three times as likely to die from diabetes than women with a higher income.

Statistics show, too, that there is a high correlation between health and education. For adults with chronic diseases, communicable

diseases and injuries, the death rate falls as education rises.

The picture for children is just as desperate. Children in poor families are seven times as likely to have been exposed to lead-based paint, which puts them at risk for mental and physical disabilities. Children in lower-income families, too, are less likely to be vaccinated than those above the poverty level and twice as likely to be hospitalized for asthma.

Neighborhood Networks Facts...

WHAT: Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative launched by HUD's Office of Multifamily Housing in September 1995 that encourages the development of resource and computer learning centers in HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing.

- More than 620 centers in operation*
- Thousands of business, community and government partners
- More than 744 properties with centers in planning*

WHO: Serves HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing residents, owners, managers, partners and communities.

*as of 08/00

Visit our website at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org

Is there is a connection between access to health care and the successful transition from welfare to work?

Absolutely. It is recognized that to support an individual's efforts to move off of welfare and into the work world, programs need to include more than job training. The Urban Institute has identified barriers to employment that include health limitations, physical disabilities, mental health problems, substance abuse, and health and behavioral problems of children. Access to convenient preventive and primary health care can address these obstacles faced by many women and men in their efforts to obtain and retain employment. Once employed, it is just as important for these residents and their children to continue to have access to health care services. Without it, children miss school days and parents are forced to lose time from work, thereby jeopardizing their employment.

What kinds of activities can Neighborhood Networks centers provide to promote access to health care and improve an individual's overall health?

- Exercise programs and nutritional counseling may reduce heart disease. A smoking cessation program may reduce lung cancer rates. A weight loss program, nutritional counseling and periodic visits from a nurse to monitor diabetes may make a world of difference in the progression of the disease.
- Children need vaccinations at their required time and periodic screening for lead. This care is often

available through partnerships with public health departments. Parenting classes can promote good child health and lower infant mortality rates.

- Centers can help families understand complicated health insurance coverage issues, help families enroll their children in the new Children's Health Insurance Program and help residents entering the workforce understand their eligibility for Medicaid as they make the transition to work.

These are just a few of the many health care program options that centers can implement to promote a healthy lifestyle and ensure that residents have increased access to health care services.

How can I find out more?

✉ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
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